

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Missoula Field Office  
3255 Fort Missoula Rd.  
Missoula, Montana 59804

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

**A. Background**

BLM Office: Missoula Field Office

NEPA Number (if applicable): DOI-BLM-MT-B010-2016-0014-CX

Proposed Action Title/Type: Scotchmans Gulch Fire Fuel Break Log Deck Sale

Location of Proposed Action (include county):

T. 8 N., R. 15 W., P.M.M., sec. 20

T. 8 N., R. 15 W., P.M.M., sec. 29

Granite County, Montana

Description of Proposed Action: During the Scotchmans Gulch Fire in 2015, a fuel break was created along Forest Service Road 4325 to aid in the defense of the private homes along Willow Creek Road. The Proposed Action is to remove three log decks (approximately 545 trees) that were created during the clearing of the fuel break. The three logs decks are located along the opposite side of the road from the fuel break. The purchaser will process the logs within the fuel break and pile the slash there for subsequent burning by BLM staff. All equipment will be inspected for noxious weeds prior to commencement of operations and the area will be monitored post treatment. The purchaser will be required to post warning signs that meet Montana Department of Transportation guidelines at designated locations to provide for public safety. Removal of the three BLM log decks will coincide with US Forest Service and Montana DNRC operations to remove the log decks that were created on their lands.

**B. Land Use Plan Conformance**

Land Use Plan Name: Garnet Resource Management Plan, as amended.

Date Approved/Amended: 1/10/86

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

Page 25, Chapter 2, Forestry Program Guidance, (A) Resource Condition and Use Objectives 3. *Efficiently harvest and use the timber resource without creating unacceptable environmental impacts on the forest ecosystem.*

**C: Compliance with NEPA:**

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9. C. (2) *Sale and removal of*

*individual trees or small groups of trees which are dead, diseased, injured, or which constitute a safety hazard, and where access for the removal requires no more than maintenance to existing roads*

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR Part 46.215 apply.

Extraordinary Circumstances		
<b>The project would:</b>		
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		
Yes	No  X	<b>Rationale:</b> <i>The project would not have significant impacts on public health and safety because all processing and loading of material will be conducted on USFS controlled road 4325 which is closed year-round to public vehicular access and will be signed accordingly at the locked gate to warn walk-in visitors. During General Big Game Rifle Season all logging related activities will be restricted. Hazards to public health and safety due to logging related traffic along Willow Creek Road and USFS road 5156 will be mitigated through contract stipulations that require the placement of warning signs at designated locations along the haul route and through active sales administration by BLM, USFS, and Montana DNRC personnel.</i>
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		
Yes	No  X	<b>Rationale:</b> <i>There are several historic mining sites in the area of the log decks. These sites may potentially be eligible for the National Register under criterion D. Therefore, these sites will be flagged for avoidance from all machinery. The BLM PI for this project will be briefed as to the whereabouts of the sites and buffer areas.</i>
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102 (2) (E)].		
Yes	No  X	<b>Rationale:</b> <i>Salvaging timber in such a small area (3- 1/10<sup>th</sup> acre log decks) has not caused any controversial environmental effects or unresolved conflicts with past salvage projects. Careful contract administration has always been key to minimizing any environmental effects or unresolved conflicts.</i>
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve		

unique or unknown environmental risks.

Yes

No

X

**Rationale:** The sale consists of three log decks (approximately 545 trees) that are lying on the eastern side of the road with the fuel break on the western side. Logs will be moved from the decks and processed within the fuel break. Loading will occur with the log trucks remaining on the established road. Slash will be piled within the fuel break. It is estimated that eight loads of material will be hauled from the BLM project area. Due to the simplicity and the relatively small spatial and temporal scale of the project it is highly unlikely that any unpredicted consequences will occur from this action.

5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principal about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

Yes

No

X

**Rationale:** This action represents a singular effort by the Bureau of land Management to salvage the economic value of timber that was cut during emergency fire suppression activities. It does not represent an action that is meant to set a precedent for future actions.

6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

Yes

No

X

**Rationale:** See CFR 1508.7.

7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.

Yes

No

X

**Rationale:** As described above in question #2 there are several historic mining sites near the log decks and shall be avoided. Appropriate mitigation measures are flagging sites for avoidance and briefing BLM PI as to avoidance areas.

8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

Yes

No

X

**Rationale:** The Proposed Action is anticipated to have no effect on the bull trout (threatened), bull trout Critical Habitat, grizzly bear (threatened), Canada lynx (threatened), or western yellow-billed cuckoo (threatened), and is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the wolverine (candidate). Critical Habitat does not occur. Removal of the three log decks would have no impact on these species or their habitat. The Proposed Action would last 2-3 days and direct, indirect, and cumulative effects are considered insignificant and would never reach a level where take (harm or harass) of individuals is likely to occur.

9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Yes

No

X

**Rationale:** The project is not likely to violate any Federal, State, Local, or Tribal Environmental Protection Laws.

10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		
Yes	No	<b>Rationale:</b> <i>No evidence can be obtained that would suggest that low income or minority populations would experience disproportionately high or adverse effects by this action.</i>
	X	
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		
Yes	No	<b>Rationale:</b> <i>There are no sacred sites in this area.</i>
	X	
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		
Yes	No	<b>Rationale:</b> <i>The purchaser shall notify the authorized officer prior to entering BLM tracts to inspect all heavy equipment for noxious weeds. If any are found, the equipment must be power-washed and re-inspected prior to entering and proceeding with any harvest activities on BLM tracts. This will minimize the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area.</i>
	X	

I considered the Proposed Action and the Extraordinary Circumstances and have determined there are no significant impacts associated with the project. Use of this CX is appropriate.

#### Staff Input

Dan Downing	Fisheries Biologist	<i>[Signature]</i> 6/13/16
Jim Sparks	Wildlife Biologist	<i>[Signature]</i> 6/13/16
Steve Flood	Hydrologist	<i>[Signature]</i> 6/13/16
Steve Bell	Rangeland Conservationist	<i>[Signature]</i> 6/13/16
Jody Miller	Archeologist	<i>[Signature]</i> 6-13-16
Ken Cook	Noxious and Invasive Weeds Specialist	<i>[Signature]</i> 6/13/16
Maria Craig	Outdoor Recreation Planner	<i>Maria Craig</i> 6/13/16
Michael Walton	Forester/Preparer	<i>[Signature]</i> 6/13/16

**D: Signature**

Authorizing Official:  
(Signature)

Name:

Joe L. Asher

Title:

Field Manager

Date:

6/13/16

